2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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well together during the ensuing summer months, a band or two moving off by themselves to rejoin the tribe in time to prepare for whatever Sacred Dances might have been scheduled, and parties of 10, 20, 30 or more men would go off to raid the enemy. Precautions had to be taken, too, against the ever-present danger of being raided by the enemy, especially by smaller groups separated from the main tribe as they went further and further from the center of their territory in quest of game.[1]

The hides of buffalo killed during the spring and summer were used to make parfleshes, moccasin soles, lodge covers, ropes and the like. Fresh meat was usually plentiful although it was necessary to move six or eight times a summer to keep up with the buffalo, some smaller herds of which apparently remained in Montana in spite of the migration of the vast majority to the north. Meantime as the various berries, wild fruits and wild roots ripened, collecting was done whenever opportunity offered, neither tribal nor band movements being determined, so far as we are aware, by that objective, but depending almost entirely on the whereabouts of the buffalo. During August and September, the rutting season, the buffalo joined in great milling masses leaving bare the surrounding range for many miles. The buffalo then separated into smaller herds again and by October, when the Gros Ventres started their concerted fall hunt, the buffalo were in prime condition, their coats sleek and fine.

The best time for robe hunting was approximately from October 15 to November 15, but the hunt continued until all had sufficient meat dried and stored to see them through the winter. It was said that as many robes as possible were dressed with the fur on, and

[1] In this connection it is interesting to note that the old Cree, quoted by Thompson, pp. 329–30, after describing a drawn battle between the Snake and Piegan about 1730 concludes: ". . . night put an end to the battle without a scalp being taken on either side, and in those days such was the result, unless one party was more numerous than the other. The great mischief of war then, was as now [1786], by attacking and destroying small camps of 10–30 tents which are obliged to separate for hunting." Such was evidently still the case in the middle of the 19th century. Denig writes in 1854, pp. 548–50, that when the contending parties are nearly equal, little damage is done. The worst damage occurs, however, when 200 to 400 warriors surprise a camp of 20 to 30 lodges.

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556 than in the actual production of raw materials. This was especially true of the young unmarried man who, though his ability to hunt was important, was even more anxious to establish his reputation for bravery.

Food

262 The Gros Ventres met their need for food very largely, but not exclusively, through a meat diet. Flesh of the buffalo was the meat par excellence and was considered by the Gros Ventres their "real food." To those who had been brought up on buffalo meat, beef was a poor substitute. It was said, by those who experienced the change of diet after the disappearance of the buffalo in 1884, that many of the older people "died of starvation" when deprived of buffalo meat. The Gros Ventres refused for a long time to accustom themselves to beef because "beef, even when fresh, smells so badly, and when we would see oxen slobber it turned our stomachs."

Buffalo meat, either fresh or dried, formed a major part of the dietary the year round. Each man had his own preference as to various parts of the buffalo. Charles Buckman, for instance, liked best the flanks, if fat, but some preferred the brisket. The tenderest part was the hump (withers) and the tenderloin was also a delicacy. Roast ribs, a whole rib for each person, were considered a most succulent feast and the embryo was highly appreciated. It was customary to eat raw the liver and manifolds dipped in blood and to drink some of the fresh blood. Nothing of the buffalo was wasted and every possible part was eaten even to the predigested vegetable food from the stomach and the soft inner part of the hoofs. The coagulated milk from a buffalo cow carrying young or nursing a calf was enjoyed by most, although it was
● [251] reported that some individuals did not care particularly for it. The guts were cleaned, dried, cooked and put away, and the lungs were sliced and dried. To be eaten with dried meat the back fat was cooked, and tallow was used in like manner. The bones were broken and boiled, and, after the grease was skimmed off and
252 stored, the bone broth was used plain or with either blood or
262 berries therein.

Pemmican was made from the base of the tenderloin, a long

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262 mountain lion, lynx, bobcat, and otter, never served as food.

[251] Of vegetable foods there was a variety, especially of berries and roots, many of which were gathered in large amounts and dried for winter use, either as seasoning in broths and soups, or to be mixed with grease. Currents, strawberries and raspberries were picked when ripe and only in sufficient quantities to meet daily needs. Juneberries, or service-berries, and gooseberries were dried and stored away in parfleshes. Bitterroot, wild onions and wild carrots were likewise preserved for winter use, as well as wild rhubarb stems. In July larb-berries, another name for which is bear-berries, and "plums" were ripe; and in August the choke-cherries and wild turnips were dried and pounded. In late August rose-berries were ready to eat, but were better after a touch of frost. There was no need of storing too many of these since they did not freeze and could be garnered all winter long. It is said that of all the berries and roots available, service-berries and choke-cherries, wild turnips and bitterroot, were the most important More of these were put up than of the others.

The yield of thorn-, rose- and larb-berries, of wild carrots and of wild rhubarb was always dependable. Other plants, however, were more erratic. For instance, one year there would be no chokecherries at all around Hays but plenty of them at Lodgepole, only ten miles distant; the next year the situation was as likely as not to be reversed. Moreover some plants grew only in a few localities at best. Red turnips or beet turnips, described as something like a radish, was one of those which was to be found only sporadically and in sandy places; the wild potato, another of the less common plants, grew only in the Sweet Grass Hills and in the Moccasin Mountains south of the Little Rockies, and around Billings.

262 222 Such additional foods were evidently of sufficient importance that the women occasionally ventured quite far from camp for berry-picking and root-digging expeditions, disregarding the very real danger of surprise by the enemy. That these edibles were not despised is suggested, too, by the fact that the digging-stick had a prominent place at the center pole in the Women's Lodge, although it is true that the principal concern in the rite centered about the buffalo.

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224 476 would share at least the meat, if not the hides, with the less fortunate, which latter would contribute by helping skin and butcher.

[431] Butchering was quite an art and was considered the man's work, although occasionally women accompanied the hunting party if there were a shortage of men, as was liable to be the case especially in winter. Should the party have crossed a river to hunt, the meat was prepared for transportation on a raft by being cut into large chunks, and each two chunks skewered and joined by a thong of sufficient length to hang on the poles forming the raft. The raft

[396] was built by crossing two long poles at one end, the other ends free and forming an angle of about thirty degrees. Three or four shorter poles were placed crosswise and lashed firmly in place with rawhide. The paunch of the buffalo, after being washed out, was used as a container for the many leftover bits of meat and was tied to the middle of the lower rung of the raft. A whole beef could thus be loaded on such a raft and towed across by one horse-

[492] man. When, as was more usually the case, the meat was to be packed back to camp by horses, the butchering was done differently but in such a way that a whole buffalo could be packed on a single

[251] horse.[1] Sometimes in winter when a small party went out and they could not pack all the meat back in one trip, the remainder was buried in the snow and called for the following day.

462 281 Once the proceeds of the hunt were turned over to the households of the individual hunters, it was the woman's task to cook the food for immediate consumption and to prepare the surplus for storage. Her most arduous and time-consuming task was the dressing of skins and the manufacture of these into finished articles of clothing, containers, lodge-covers, and so on. It was stated that skins in one stage of preparation or another were nearly always at hand.[2] "They didn't do things in a haphazard way because there was a certain time to do this and a certain time to do that." From the hides of buffalo killed during the spring and early summer, when the hair was not thick, they made the parfleshes and bags, soles for moccasins, rawhide ropes, and lodge-covers. In the fall, when the hide was furry, robes were made.

The older women informants described how, when they were

[1] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 149.

[2] For some details on skin dressing, see Kroeber, 1908, p. 150.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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on the part of the men for supplying the raw materials. This, however, was more than offset by the fact that the time consumed in producing the raw materials was less than that required to process and complete the manufacture thereof. The following calculation will give at least a rough approximation of the situation. It was estimated by our Gros Ventre informants that one woman would be able to dress about twenty robes a season, i.e., robes taken in the fall hunt and dressed with the fur on. This means she had to devote the equivalent of 60 full days' time to this task alone.[7] Actually she would not be free to work on robes exclusively, as she had to dress other kinds of skins, carry on her ordinary daily routine of procuring fuel and water, care of children, preparation of the daily meals, and in addition cut the enormous quantities of meat to be dried for winter consumption.[8] In contrast, if we can rely on Hornaday's figures, 15–25 men killed about a thousand buffalo in a fall season,[9] which means, taking the higher figure, one man alone would average more than two women could handle.

Value

Given the abundant supply of game, especially of buffalo, and the methods of exploiting it, the individual who controlled the relatively scarce means of production was in a position to command a larger labor supply and consequently to produce a larger surplus. The Boy summed up the situation thus: "The Gros Ventres in their old way of life used to want a lot of horses because they knew from experience that if a man had a lot of horses he could acquire a little wealth and position in life. If, for instance, a family had a lot of horses, the man might have three or four or five buffalo horses with which to chase game and would bring in lots of skins and meat and could afford more wives, and the more wives he had the bigger and wealthier he would be. He could have

[7] Denig, pp. 540–41, estimates three days' work to prepare one robe for market and states that the preparation of 25 to 30 robes was an excellent winter's work for one woman, with the average at 18 to 20 robes.

[8] Hornaday, p 436, states that a whole buffalo cow, if economically worked up, yields about 55 lbs. of pemmican and 45 lbs. of dried meat.

[9] Hornaday, p. 465.

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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buffalo tongues, for the celebration. The vower and his assistants would through their crier announce to the people whether the camp would move for good hunting. On the march, the vower and his company took their place in line immediately after the sacred Pipes. No one was allowed to hunt or run the buffalo until the signal was given.

During the hunt there would be foot and horse races, shooting contests and gambling matches between the "talls" and "shorts." The losers in the gambling would have to "cook," that is, to provide a meal for the winners, a feast at which the rest of the people, including the children, would horn in. Each one of the losers had to furnish some food or clothing and a smoke (not the pipe itself) to the winners. If one of the losers failed to bring a filled pipe along with the food or clothing wager, the wager was rejected, but he was given a chance to go get one. The winners kept track of the losers, and if any of the latter failed to pay up, they would not do anything to him at once while they were sitting around eating. But afterwards, the winners, followed by the rest of the people, would go to the lodge of the delinquent loser, who usually did not and dared not run away. Here the enemy-friend of the loser would take the latter out of his lodge, and lay him on a spread robe or blanket. The winners would then carry him to the stream or river, give him a good swing and throw him into the water. All the people would follow to see the fun, and the young boys would pelt him with buffalo chips. The victim had to take it all good naturedly and not lose his temper, and the crowd had a good laugh. If the loser were not in his lodge when the winners arrived, they would fetch water, and his enemy-friend would give the loser's bed a good drenching.

The hunt continued, the group moving here and there, until enough tongues and other meat was collected, the tongues having been turned over to the vower to be jerked by his wife or wives. Then came the earlier-mentioned four whole nights of singing, done either on successive nights, or from time to time as the tribe moved toward the spot selected for the Sacrifice Dance. After arrival there the fourth of the four all-night singings took place, marking the first night or beginning of the Dance proper, which

1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
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passed, and so drove them forward over the bank into the enclosure. After horses were secured, the buffalo were generally run down. It is said that a buffalo shot with an arrow fell to the other side, never breaking the arrow by falling upon it. 224

The meat of an entire buffalo would be carried on a horse. It was cut in small pieces, which were tied to the ends of strips of the skin and then slung over the horse's back so as to balance. If necessary, the hunter would mount above. It is said that sometimes as many as four deer were carried on one horse. [492]

When a buffalo was killed, half the skin was sometimes stitched or tied into a sack, the meat put into it, and the bundle dragged home by a rope around the shoulders of a person. In other cases the meat would be tied into bundles and carried home on the shoulders. The buffalo were usually cut up by men. Women were said to have taken part in this work when luck was unusually good and many buffalo had been killed. After a man had brought home meat, the women cut it into thin slices, which were hung on racks to dry. The dried meat was either packed in parfleches, or pounded fine and made into pemmican by mixture with berries. Meat, whether fresh or dried, was usually eaten after having been boiled in water; but when one was hungry or in haste a piece would be put on a stick and turned over the fire. [482] [251] [252]

Traps for foxes and other animals, even bears, were constructed by making an enclosure, over the opening of which a heavy log, sliding between four sticks to keep it in place, was supported on a single slender upright stick resting on another stick attached to the bait. Other logs might be leaned against the first one to give it additional weight.

Birds such as sage-hens, ducks, and geese, were formerly not hunted extensively. The eggs, however, formed favorite food. When a camp was pitched near a lake, the young men would strip and go out into the water looking for duck-eggs. Fish were not caught except by children, for amusement. 223 [236]

When a camp was broken, small brush tents with windows of grass were built. Fat and meat were strewed about the place and a man entered the ambush before daylight. He could look and shoot through the grass, but he could not be seen inside. Birds as large as eagles were secured in this way.

Crows and magpies were caught with sinew snares attached to a willow hoop. Meat was laid in the middle of the hoop. Walking about inside of this, the birds caught their feet in the snares and were unable to fly away.

Gophers were caught by means of a horsehair loop fastened to the end of a rope and laid around a gopher-hole. A person lay down, and when the gopher raised its head he jerked the rope. 224

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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will see the thing I use." White Man looked up and saw a bladder[8] up above the door. The man said: "That is what I use." White Man said: "I see it."

The man took the bag from where it hung and he and White Man went to the rising ground. When they reached there the man said: "What I use to hunt with and make a living with and do all things with is in this bag. You will see. Make your heart strong." So the man untied the bag. As he did so adult people began to come out of the bag. The crowd got bigger and bigger around them. The man then said: "This is enough." So he closed the opening of the bag and tied it up again.

After he had tied it up the man said to White Man: "Here are the people I use when I want to do anything. They are the ones who hunt." The man said to the people: "Go hunt and bring the choicest things to eat to my lodge. Myself and my guest want to eat some more."

So the man and White Man went back to the lodge and stayed there all day. That night the same thing happened that had happened on the first and second night previously. They ate and ate until they had enough and were filled and then they slept.

The next day White Man moved on and went his way. Then White Man began to study and think how he could acquire from the man the man's way of living and of getting a living. So White Man studied how to get the man to let him have this bladder. So he hit upon a plan. He decided to cut himself, as the Indians do in mourning, and to cry. So he cut himself and came crying loud to the man's lodge. When he got to the lodge he walked around it crying and crying. The man and woman heard White Man but they knew that White Man was a tricky fellow and they paid no attention to him. But White Man just kept on crying. They heard White Man crying until they went to sleep.

When they woke up the next morning the man wondered what had become of White Man. He said to the woman: "Go out and see if White Man is around." She went and there was White Man asleep outside. The man woke White Man up and invited him into the lodge. White Man went in and sat down, and in the course of time the man said to him: "What do you want? Why have you cut yourself and made yourself suffer and cried?" White Man said: "I did so for a very serious reason. My enemies have killed my whole family, my wife and children, and have destroyed my home. I am destitute and do not know how I am going to live. So I thought I would come to you and ask you to share the bladder with me and tell me how to use it, so I may make ready to take revenge on the people who destroyed my family and home." The man, knowing White Man to be what he was, refused at once: "No. You will go to extremes. You will abuse it. You are crazy." White Man begged all the more. The man and woman were silent for a long time. But White Man kept talking and talked so

[8] A gall bladder sack, attached to the liver. Such gall bladders were used by the Gros Ventres to store grease prepared and mixed with berries and were kept closed to keep bugs out.